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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006614

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/06/2016

TAGS: PTER PREF PREL PGOV TU IZ

SUBJECT: MAKHMOUR: TURKEY AWAITS ANSWERS FROM GOI BEFORE IT
WILL NEGOTIATE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4371 AND PREVIOUS

1B. ANKARA 5642 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POL/C Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Turkish MFA still must complete negotiations on the Makhmour camp Tripartite Agreement with UNHCR and will not discuss the agreement with the Iraqi government until the GOI formally responds to UNHCR's June 1 letter to Iraqi President Talabani. Turkey would welcome the U.S. signing the Tripartite Agreement. MFA reported that the Turkish parliament will have to approve the Tripartite Agreement. ICRC's Ankara representative told us that the Iraqi Red Crescent may step in to support the camp's residents should UNHCR cut off funding. End summary.

12. (C) We met December 6 with MFA Director General for Security Affairs (S/CT-equivalent) Hayati Guven to get a readout from his November 15 discussions with UNHCR and U.S. officials in Geneva on the Tripartite Agreement for durable solutions and closure of the Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq. Guven reported that the discussions went well, but that the new version of the text he had received from UNHCR subsequent to this meeting still had some problematic language. He plans to meet with UNHCR's Turkey representative in 7-10 days, and invited us to join the meeting.

13. (C) Guven noted that UNHCR's text adds the United States as an observer signatory. He was pleased with this development, adding that U.S. backing for the agreement -- even if only as an observer -- would increase the GOT's confidence that the closure of Makhmour camp would be realized. Indeed, Turkey would likely support the U.S. signing on as a full party. We responded that UNHCR had inserted this without the advance consent of U.S. representatives at the Nov. 15 Geneva meeting, and that the USG was considering the issue.

14. (C) We asked when Turkey would be ready to negotiate the text in a trilateral (Turkey-Iraq-UNHCR) setting, adding that we hoped this could occur as soon as possible. Guven responded that Turkey will not discuss the text with the

Iraqis until the GOI responds to the letter the UN High Commissioner sent to President Talabani on June 1. The Iraqi response must cover two areas, Guven insisted:

-- Measures the GOI will take to expel PKK elements in the camp and ensure a safe registration, evaluation, and returns process, and

-- Whether those refugees who do not wish to return to Turkey will be resettled in a dispersed manner to the three provinces, Dohuk, Erbil, Suleymaniyah in northern Iraq (or abroad).

We responded that we understood that Mission Iraq was discussing a response with the GOI, and would continue to do so.

¶ 15. (C) Guven emphasized that Turkey's main objective in this process was the permanent closure of the camp. He referred to the November 15 discussions in Geneva as centering on restoring the humanitarian nature of the camp, and said that Turkey is not interested in a scenario in which UNHCR carries out small-scale repatriation to Turkey but the camp remains open. He said Turkey will insist in its discussions with the GOI that the camp be closed and its facilities no longer made available to the PKK.

¶ 16. (C) Guven confirmed that an GOT interagency legal review has concluded that the text of the Tripartite Agreement will have to be approved not only by the cabinet but also by the Turkish parliament. He acknowledged that this could prove difficult and time-consuming, particularly in a charged political environment (parliament elects a new President of

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Turkey in May 2007, and parliamentary elections must take place in November). He recalled that it took the parliament five months to approve an international anti-corruption agreement Guven had worked on.

¶ 17. (C) We also met November 21 with the Head of the ICRC Mission in Turkey, Pierre Ryter. He reported that ICRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent had held recent preliminary discussions on what role Red Crescent might have in supporting Makhmour camp's residents when and if UNHCR cuts off support. We understand from our discussions with UNHCR's Turkey office that UNHCR is struggling with how to reconcile its policy decision that the humanitarian nature of the camp has been compromised with its humanitarian obligation to support its residents. UNHCR may be considering Red Crescent as a "bridge" to provide some support until the camp can be closed. (We did not discuss our conversation with ICRC with MFA's Guven.)

¶ 18. (C) Comment: Guven was candid with us in hinting at the Turkish military's hard line on the Makhmour issue, and that this may be a difficult process. The added wrinkle of the required approval of the Turkish parliament could well drag the process out and further politicize an already difficult issue in which the MFA is trying to achieve a result but must avoid allegations of being "soft" on the PKK issue. We are making progress on Makhmour, but it is still an open question whether this process can be completed in the next year. End comment.

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